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What's It All About?: A Selection of Contemporary Prints from the Collection

La Salle University Art Museum

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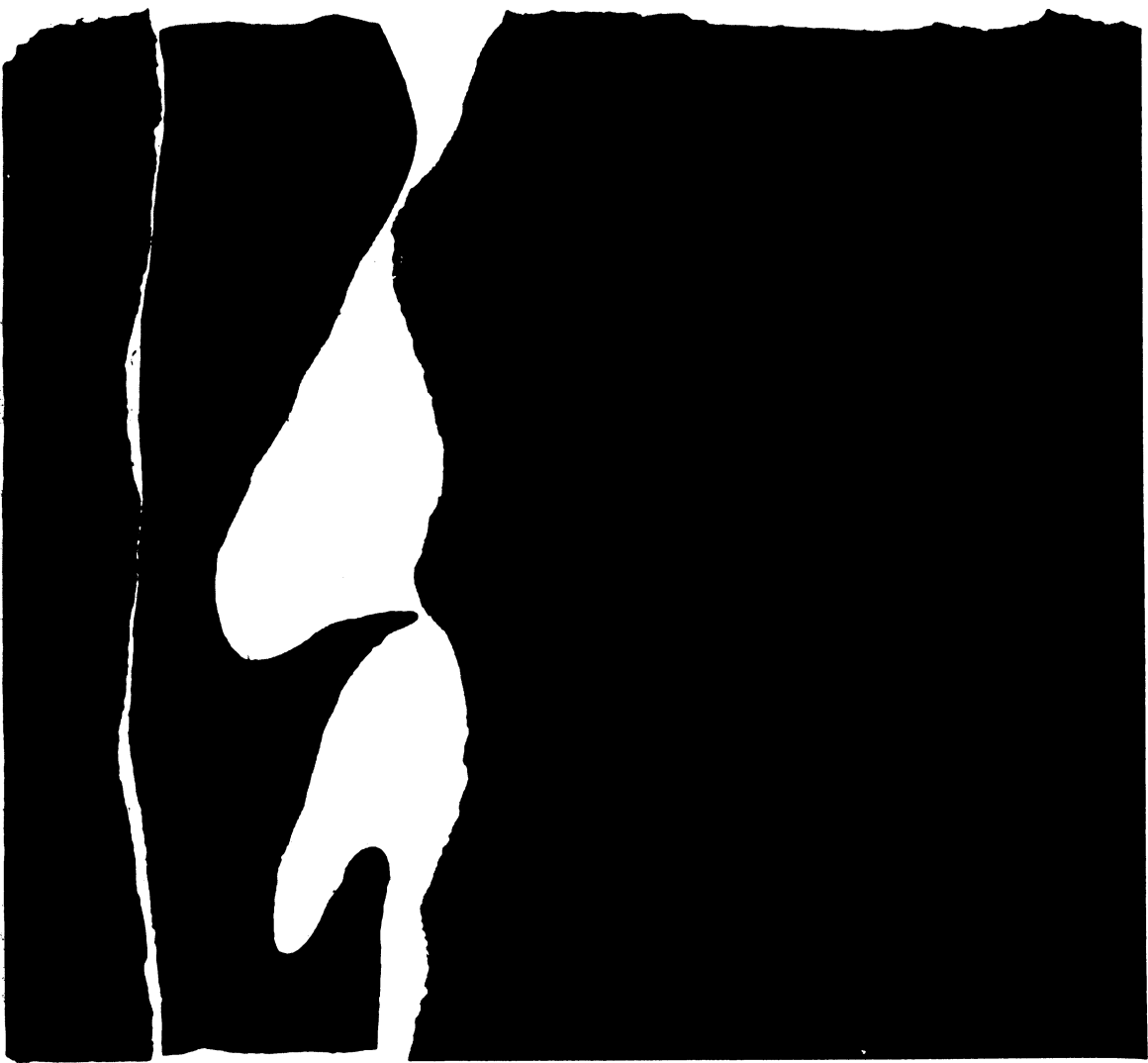


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WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Cover Illustration: Adja Yunker (American, 1900-)

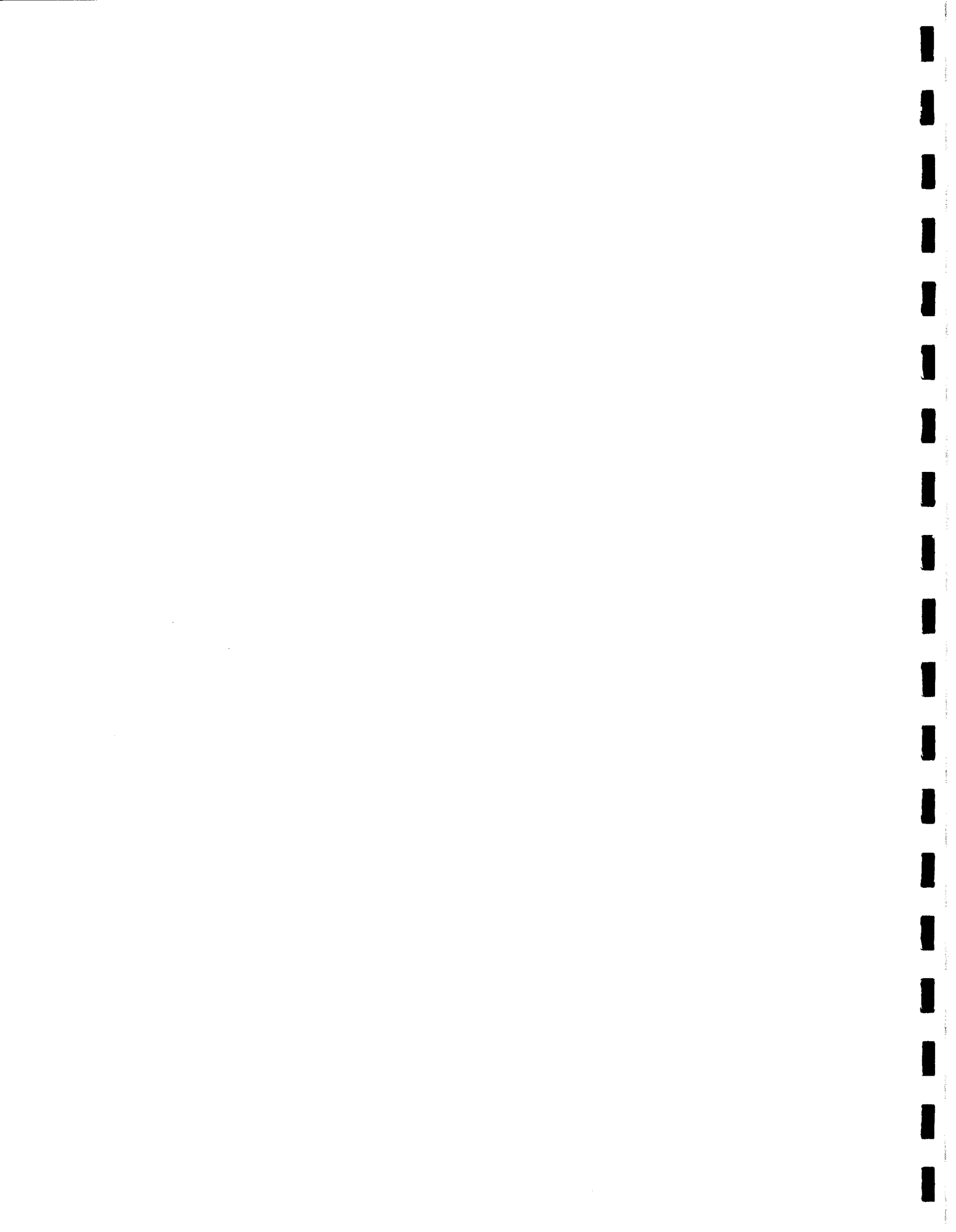
Homage To The Monks of Saigon
Color silkscreen and lithograph

What's It All About?

A Selection of Contemporary Prints
From the Collection

La Salle College Art Gallery

July---October 1982



Introduction

In an attempt to confront such familiar reactions to modern art as "I or my child could do better than that," and "I can't understand it," The LaSalle College Art Museum is exhibiting a small selection from its contemporary print collection. Because many modern styles no longer imitate visible objects there is a tendency to feel we can no longer relate to it on any level. Therefore, we feel alienated or even hostile to an image that at first seems far removed from the human experience. This exhibition seeks then to, hopefully, shed some light on the "unintelligibility" of modern art.

The twentieth century has brought forth a multiplicity of styles: Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, Constructivism, Cubism, Minimalism, Pop Art, Photo/Super-Realism, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Geometric Abstraction, to name the dominant styles. Volumes of literature and acres of gallery space would be needed to document the vast diversity of modern art, often executed in a very large format. However, for practical purposes and so as not to confuse the issue, we have chosen to concentrate on exhibiting prints in the styles we've underlined above. There are examples of most other modern styles in the museum's print collection, which can be specially viewed upon request.

With the invention of photography in 1836 came Baudelaire's statement, "From now on painting is dead." The idea behind such a statement was simply that if the camera could capture reality more accurately than the human eye there was little need for the artist to recreate the physical world around him, as had been the tradition ever since the Renaissance. Thus, the incentive to turn away from narration, and a

rational and accurate re-creation of the past or present produced works that became basically abstract or non-objective, as time went on, although sometimes, as in Surrealist art, the figures remain representational.

By the 20th century, artists found a new source of subject matter: subjective rather than objective reality - the world of one's emotions, fantasies, imaginings, and dreams. Artists relied on the formal elements of art such as color, pattern, line, and shape for the evocation of a particular feeling, mood, or atmosphere. In other words, color and line was used as symbol, metaphor and suggestion, not for description or documentation.

While recognizing the impersonal quality such abstract works may assume, with careful contemplation, the spectator might discover that the visual metaphor seen in such abstract works relates to something in his own experience. It is not necessary, nor is it possible, for the spectator to decipher the individual feeling of the artist. Thus, there is no right or wrong reaction to the content of the artist's work, and the spectator is free to search out his own private meaning for the image presented.

The prints in this exhibition which are in the Geometric Abstract style reveal the "Art for Art Sake" principle stretched to its furthest limit. Shapes, lines, color, and the arrangement thereof becomes the content and is to be appreciated solely for its aesthetic value, independent of any association with a particular object, idea, or issue.

We can compare the abstract expression in these contemporary prints with musical expression throughout the ages. Instrumental music is abstract expression through sound and like contemporary

prints makes use of rhythm, texture, harmony, and gradation of tone to vary the image.

Modern art involves a contemplative effort for it takes time to look, in order to discover a feeling or association the image might suggest to us. The work is not to be viewed for instant recognition except perhaps in the case of Pop Art and Photo-Realism of the most recent decades. This small encounter with contemporary prints will perhaps whet the appetite and encourage the visitor to reexamine his outlook on modern art keeping in mind that appreciation is to achieved primarily through visual rather than verbal explanation.

Caroline Wistar
Curator

Socrates: "By 'beauty of shape' I don't in this instance mean what most people would understand by it-I am not thinking of animals or certain pictures, but, so the thesis goes - a straight line or a circle and resultant planes and solids produced on a lathe or with ruler and square. Do you see the sort of thing I mean? On my view these things are not, as other things are, beautiful in a relative way, but are always beautiful in themselves, and yield their own special pleasures quite unlike those of scratching. I include colours, too, that have the same characteristic."

from Plato's Philebus, translated with notes and commentary by J.C.B. Gosling, page 51. (Clarendon Press. Oxford 1925).

Check - List

Most of the prints in this exhibition were purchased from the International Graphic Arts Society (IGAS) subscription series of contemporary prints, over the years 1966-1972. The panel of selection for this series was made up of prominent museum print curators and graphic artists of national repute.

1. Karel Appel (1921-), Dutch
Visage Colore 1969
Lithograph in seven colors
25½ x 19½ ins. 68-G-221
2. Urs Rausmuller (1940-), Swiss
Big Blue 1969
Cellocut in blue
19 x 19½ ins. 70-G-277
3. Marko Spalatin (1945-), American
Cube Group 1971
Serigraph in fourteen colors
24 x 19½ ins. 71-G-335
4. Olle Hansperr (1923-), Swedish
Picture of a Boat 1971
Etching
27-7/16 x 33½ ins. 71-G-344

5. John Formicola (1941-), American

Meditation #2

Silkscreen

28½ x 21¼ ins.

Given by Mr. & Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin
76-G-582

6. Jack Sonnenberg (1925-), Canadian

Stretch 1970

Collograph in three colors

26½ x 18 ins.

71-G-304

7. Ferdinand Springer (1907-)

Hathor 1970

Etching

11 x 31 ins.

70-G-278

8. Kunihiro Amano (1929-), Japanese

Castle Gate 1966

Embossed color woodcut

22-¾ x 16¼ ins.

68-G-241

9. Achilles Droungas (1940-), Greek

Sunset 1971

Etching in various shades, partly embossed

13¼ x 22 ins.

72-G-377

10. Ludwig Sander (1906-), American

Three Blues 1966

Lithograph in three blues with black lines

16 x 18 ins.

67-G-134

11. Otto Eglau (1917-), German
Breakwater and Tidal Pattern 1967
Etching in four colors
15 x 19 ins. 69-G-251
12. Italo Valenti (1912-), Italian
Granada 1970
Lithograph in three colors
22 x 30 ins. 71-G-336
13. Roberto de Lamônica (1933-), Brazilian
The Dream 1969
Etching in color and aquatint in three colors
22 x 17 ins. 69-G-266
14. Hideo Hagiwara (1913-), Japanese
Germination No. 5 1965
Woodcut in six colors
25½ x 17 ½ ins. 66-G-55
15. Victor Vasarely (1908-), Hungarian
Tau-Ceti 1967
Serigraph in two colors
16-3/4 x 16-3/4 ins. 67-G-139
16. Jean Baier (1932-), Swiss
Composition 72 1972
Serigraph on aluminum foil in six colors
18 x 19 ¼ ins. 72-G-370

17. Terry Haass (1923-), Czechoslovakian
Concerto 1964
Etching in three colors
10 x 15 ins. 66-G-19
18. Hitishi Nakazato (Contemporary), Japanese
Thonga A 1977
Silkscreen with Carborundum
17 x 10 ins. Given by Benjamin D. Bernstein
80-G-1091
19. Ansei Uchima (19210), American
Three Sphere-Space (Violet) #2 1970
Woodcut in five colors
28 x 18½ ins. 66-G 54
20. Richard Anuszkiewicz (1930-), American
Grids 1972
Lithograph
45½ x 31 ins. 79-G-1067
21. John Beckley (Contemporary), American
Abstract
Silkscreen (Trial Proof) 1981-G-1
22. Koosje Wagenaar (1943-), Dutch
The Day After Tomorrow 1972
Etching in three colors
11½ x 9¼ ins. 72-G-374

23. Eduard Flor (1925-), Hungarian

Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Salut 1972

Etching in three colors

11½ x 20 ins. 72-G-371

24. Giuseppe Santomaso (1907-), Italian

Blue Space 1968

Etching in three colors

14 x 12½ ins. 66-G-69

25. Peter Milton (1930-), American

Passage 1 1971

Photosensitive-ground etching, and engraving

17-¾ x 23-¾ ins. 80-G-1068

26. Deli Sacilotto (1936-), Canadian

Washington Street Black Series I 1970

Four colors Intaglio Relief

28 x 21¼ ins. 71-G-307

27. Andre Masson (1896-), French

Dame Au Tournesol 1970

Lithograph in five colors

23 x 17¼ ins. 69-G-252

"Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird? Why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one, without trying to understand them? But in the case of a painting people have to understand. If only they would realize above all that an artist works of necessity, that he himself is only a trifling bit of the world, and that no more importance should be attached to him than to plenty of other things which please us in the world, though we can't explain them.

Pablo Picasso

from Christian Zervos, "Conversation avec Picasso," Cahiers d'Art,
(Paris, 1935).



